

Ways to Secure the High Level Bridge (S. Mandel)

Recommendation:

That the August 20, 2013, Community Services report CR_14, be received for information

Report Summary

This report provides a summary of actions to improve security and safety on the High Level Bridge.

Previous Council/Committee Action

At the April 24, 2013, City Council meeting, Mayor S. Mandel made the following inquiry:

The High Level Bridge has been a location of tragedy for both individuals and families. I would like Administration to provide a report to Community Services Committee on ways to secure the bridge from potential further tragedy.

Report

According to Edmonton Police Service Downtown Division, there have been a total of nine incidents of suicide, suicide attempt and/or sudden death at the High Level Bridge between 2008 and 2012.

It is important to note that these statistics are categorized specifically to the address of the High Level Bridge, 9201 – 109 Street. As such, the figures cited above do not capture the occurrences in close proximity, occurrences that mention suicide in the

report, or those that may have been changed to other category types (e.g. Mental Health Act, Warrant Execution, etc.). According to the Chief Medical Examiner, there were 14 deaths in the area around the bridge as a result of suicide in the past year.

According to the Alberta Centre for Injury Control and Research, suicides were the leading cause of injury death in 2010 with 513 deaths, accounting for 29 percent of all injury in Alberta. Provincially, there were 5,053 suicide/self-inflicted injury-related visits to hospital emergency rooms, with 1,833 resulting in admissions.

Despite these disturbing figures, a number of actions are currently underway that will improve the security and safety of the High Level Bridge.

They include:

- Additional fencing to prevent access to the top deck and fencing added at certain vulnerable points along the sidewalks.
- The Support Network's efforts to install signage with preventative messaging, including the distress line phone number, at key access points. As well, to provide ongoing support groups and suicide awareness programs.
- Research undertaken by Constable Christopher Hunter with the Edmonton Police Service on providing help phones, signage and exploration of potentially adding phones directly connected to emergency and support services.
- The proposed decorative lighting system in the "Light the Bridge

- Initiative" may provide some additional lighting for the pedestrian walkways on the bridge. This additional lighting should not negatively impact pedestrian safety and may provide some enhanced visibility under specific lighting sequences.
- The Alberta Centre for Injury Control and Research's fostering communication amongst a wide variety of suicide prevention organizations, agencies and individuals across Alberta. These public education efforts will increase awareness and assist in prevention.

A Coordinated Approach

A Crime Prevention through Environmental Design audit is currently being undertaken, and the preliminary results are available. Upon completion of the audit, these results will be reviewed to consider additional actions to further enhance safety and security of the bridge.

Budget/financial implications will be determined based on the results of the Crime Prevention through Environmental Design analysis and its suggestions relating to modifying actions currently underway.

Corporate Outcomes

Improving Edmonton's Livability.

Others Reviewing this Report

B. Belcourt, Acting General Manager,
Transportation Services